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【Article】

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1. Introduction

Answering strategies are defined as ways of answering a question in communication. Particularly, different languages generally adopt different grammatical options in answering the same question (Belletti 2007, 2009). The following question-answer pairs illustrate this point.

- (1) a. Who spoke? (English)
b. **John** spoke/did.
- (2) a. Chi ha parlato? (Italian)
who has spoken
b. **É** ha parlato **Gianni**
has spoken Gianni

The answer to the wh-question is the preverbal subject in English, as in (1), whereas the preferred answer in Italian is located in the postverbal position, as in (2).

L1 transfer is an issue long pursued in L2 acquisition research. A basic assumption is that L1 interference emerges where L2 differs from L1 (see Gass & Selinker, 1983; White, 1989; Lardiere, 2007, among others). For example, Belletti, Bennati, & Sorace (2007) reported that L1 English near-native L2 Italian learners preferred the postverbal subject structure 98% of the time. Nava (2008) found that L1 Spanish high proficiency L2 English learners preferred to place prosodic prominence on the sentence-final word in responding to the wh-question in English, as in (3).

- (3) a. Why are you looking out the window?

- b. Madonna just walked **by**!

Given these and other studies showing strong L1 effects, it is predicted that if L2 employs answering strategies distinct from those in L1, their acquisition is a challenging problem for L2 learners. Nevertheless, this area of study is relatively new in the field of L2 acquisition, and to the best of our knowledge, no research has been conducted on the acquisition of answering strategies by Japanese-speaking L2 learners of English.

The goal of this study is two-fold: To investigate (a) whether Japanese L2 learners show L1 transfer in responding orally to wh-questions, and (b) whether such transfer can be remedied through explicit classroom instruction. The paper is organized as follows: Section 2 provides a structural description of answering strategies in English and Japanese. Section 3 presents a brief review of previous acquisition studies to identify two research questions. Section 4 examines the results of our experiment, and Section 5 investigates the effects of our classroom instruction on L2 English acquisition of answering strategies. Section 6 concludes this discussion, with a few issues suggested for further research.

2. Background

2.1. Three Structural Options

According to Belletti (2009), languages show three types of answering strategies: free inversion, in-situ, and reduced cleft constructions. These are illustrated in (4)-(6) below.

- (4) a. Who spoke? (English)
 b. **John** spoke/did.
- (5) a. Chi ha parlato? (Italian)
 who has spoken
 b. È ha parlato **Gianni**
 is has spoken Gianni
- (6) a. Qui a parlé? (French)
 who spoke
 b. C'est Jean (qui est à parler)
 it was **Jean** (who spoke)

As in (4) (=1)), English adopts the focalization-in-situ structure in answering questions, thereby putting the answer in situ structurally, with prosodic prominence on the subject. By contrast, as in (5) (=2)), Italian employs the so-called “subject inversion” structure as an answering strategy. In this structure, the postverbal subject is the focus of new information. French adopts the reduced cleft, as in (6), with the answer to the *wh*-word being the complement of the expletive subject *ce* + the copula *être* structure. This is called a ‘reduced cleft,’ as the relevant CP (*qui est à parler*) is dropped.

(7) is a schematic summary of these three answering patterns.

- (7) a. [DP VP/Aux] (in situ focalization) (English: 4b)
 b. [pro VP DP] (free inversion) (Italian: 5b)
 c. [It copula DP] (reduced cleft) (French: 6b)

Belletti (2007, 2009) maintains that (7) represents a typologically exhaustive list of answering strategies available in all languages.

2.2. Answering Strategies in Japanese: Subject Clefts

Like French, Japanese adopts reduced cleft constructions to answer the *wh*-questions. Consider, for example, (8) and (9).

- (8) a. Dare-ga kita no
 who-NOM came Q
 ‘Who came?’
 b. **Anata-no sensei** (desu/da) (yo).
 You-GEN teacher copula SFP¹
 ‘(It is) your teacher.’
- (9) a. Nani-ga todoita no
 what-NOM arrived Q
 ‘What arrived?’
 b. **Atarashii kagu** (desu/da) (yo).
 new furniture copula SFP
 ‘(It is) new furniture.’

1 The sentence-final particle (SFP) *yo* can be added at the end of a sentence in order to avoid unnaturalness or soften an insistent statement.

Suppose that the question-answer pair in (8) took place in a situation where a child saw a cup of tea on the table in the living room when he came home from school. (8b) is a reduced answer to (8a), thereby providing new information related to *dare* 'who'. The answer can appear without the copula *desu* or *da*.² Similarly, the question-answer pair in (9) may occur when something is being delivered to the living room. *Nani* 'what' in (9a) can be answered simply by *atarashii kagu* 'new furniture', a reduced answer without the copula in (9b).³

This confirms that the reduced cleft is a strategic option available as an answer to wh-questions in Japanese, as in French.⁴ We assume that unlike *ce* in (6b), the expletive subject is a *pro* in (8b) and (9b) because Japanese is a pro-drop language. In short, we assume that the sentences in (8-9) are schematically represented in (10).

(10) Reduced Cleft (tentative)

[pro_j [_{CP} [_{CP} *ec*...]] DP_i (*desu/da*)

In this structure, the expletive *pro* subject corresponds to the reduced CP, which contains the empty category (*ec*) on par with DP in the complement position of the copula *desu/da*.⁵

2.3. Answering Strategies in Japanese: Nonsubject Clefts

Interestingly, reduced clefting is also available for non-subjects like object DPs or PPs in Japanese. Observe, first, that French does not permit reduced clefts for non-subject answers (Belletti 2007, 2009).

(11) a. Qu'est-ce-que t'as achet?.

'What have you bought?'

b. *C'est un livre.

² *Da* is an informal form of *desu* 'is'.

³ A reduced answer may be preferred in informal communication in order to avoid repeating what is uttered in the question. A similar suggestion is made by Belletti (2009: 253) for reduced answers in French.

⁴ Belletti (2009: 244) briefly mentions that an answer to the wh-question can contain a reduced cleft in Japanese, but does not fully elaborate on how exactly it should be represented.

⁵ As an alternate to (10), we can posit that the CP in question may undergo extraposition, as given in (i).

(i) [[pro_j DP_i (*desu/da*)] [_{CP} *ec*...]]

However, the choice of one over the other does not affect the present discussion. See Hoji (1987), Yoshimura & Nishina (2003), and Yoshimura (2014) for discussion of clefts in Japanese.

'It is a book.'

- (12) a. Ave qui es-tu sorti?
'With whom did you get out?'
b. *C'est avec Jean.
'It is with Jean.'

As shown in the (b) sentences, the reduced cleft construction is impossible as an answer to the object wh-question in (11) and the PP wh-question in (12).⁶ According to Belletti's (2007, 2009) analysis, when an answer to the wh-word occurs in the *v*P-periphery of the copula, it constitutes information focus, thereby filling an information gap. However, when a reduced cleft is used to answer either the object DP- or PP-wh, the answer occurs on the left periphery of the CP complement of the copula, thereby inducing contrastive focus in the sentence. This structural distinction is crucial in accounting for the grammatical subject cleft in (6b) and the ungrammatical non-subject clefts in (11-12) in French.

However, a different picture emerges in Japanese with respect to answering an object DP and a PP with the reduced cleft.

- (13) a. Nani-o mite-iru no
What-ACC watch-ing Q
'What are (you) looking at?'
b. **Ano supootu kaa** (da) (yo)
that sports car (is) (SFP)
'(It) (is) that sports car.'
- (14) a. Dare-to hanashita no
Who with talked Q
'Who did (you) talk with?'
b. **Ken to** da (yo)
Ken with copula (SFP)

6 If a wh-in-situ question is contained in the cleft, a reduced cleft is available as an answer to the object DP in French, as in (i) (Belletti 2007: (22)).

(i) a. C'est quoi que t'as lu?
'Is it what that you have read?'
b. C'est un roman (que j'ai lu)
'It is a novel.'

‘With Ken.’

As an answer to the object *nani* ‘what’ in the question, *ano supootu kaa* ‘that sports car’ occurs in the object position within the *vP* in (13), and similarly, as an answer to the PP *dare to* ‘with whom’ in the question, *Ken to* ‘with Ken’ appears in the adjunct position within the *vP* in (14). Although these reduced answers involve non-subject clefts, the (b) sentences are grammatical, unlike the (b) sentences in (11) and (12).⁷

Based on these facts, we revise (10) as in (15),

(15) Reduced Cleft in Japanese

[pro_j [$\text{CP}_{\text{F}} \text{ec}_{\text{F}}$] XP_i (*desu/da*)]

XP can be a DP (as either a subject or an object) or a PP.

2.4. Research Questions

As seen in (1b), focalization-in-situ is an answering strategy in English. As a further illustration, consider the examples in (16) and (17) (Zubizarreta 1998).

(16) a. Who ate the pizza?

b. **Mary** ate it.

Mary did.

(17) a. What did Mary eat?

b. Mary ate **the pizza**.

Mary is an answer to *who* in (16), and *the pizza* to *what* in (17). Nevertheless, the full sentence is employed to provide new information to the question. Thus, structural reduction is not permitted in the language, unlike in Japanese.

Thus, the present study explores the following two research questions.

⁷ We suppose that the structural rigidity of focalization is a crucial factor responsible for this distinction between French and Japanese. To be more precise, Japanese does not have a structural position designated for focus. Instead, the language employs focus case markers like *ga* and *wa* (Kuno 1973; Heycock 2008).

(18) Research Questions

- a) Do Japanese-speaking L2 learners of English show L1 effects in answering wh-questions?
- b) Can explicit classroom instruction help facilitate the L2 acquisition of answering strategies?

3. Previous Studies

Only a few studies have been conducted on the L2 acquisition of answering strategies. Belletti and Leonini (2004) investigated the acquisition of answering strategies by French-speaking and German-speaking learners of Italian using an elicitation task. Neither learner group was advanced. While the native speakers of Italian produced VS structures like (5b) up to 98% of the time, the L1 French participants produced reduced clefts like (6b) 69% of the time, and L1 German participants produced SV structures like (4b) 68% of the time. These results showed strong L1 transfer effects.

Furthermore, Belletti, Bennati, and Sorace (2007) considered how English-speaking and German-speaking learners of French performed in answering questions in the target language. In this case, both learner groups were near-native, and an elicitation task was used. Recall that both English and German use the focalization-in-situ strategy whereas French adopts the reduced clefting strategy. The results showed that both L1 English and L1 German participants employed SV structures 71% of the time, putting prosodic prominence on the subject DP in L2 French. Again, their overall performance showed strong L1 effects, both structurally and prosodically.

To the best of our knowledge, no experimental study has investigated Japanese learners' production of answering strategies in English. Based on the strong L1 effects in the previous studies, we predicted that acquiring focalization-in-situ as an answering strategy would be a difficult task for Japanese learners. Note in passing that our study was a reversed case study of Belletti, Bennati, and Sorace (2007), because Japanese-speaking learners must proceed to the acquisition of the focalization-in-situ strategy from their knowledge of the reduced cleft.

4. Method

4.1. Participants

Twelve native speakers of Japanese participated in our experiment. They were

all first year college students studying at a Japanese university, and their average TOEIC score was 554.2, the intermediate-low proficiency level equivalent to CEFR B1 and A2.

4.2. Procedure

The present study employed an elicitation task in an interview test. Two interviews were given to each participant 2 months apart. Between the interviews, two explicit training sessions were provided by the instructor in the classroom, thereby helping the participants to understand and practice the English answering patterns.⁸ The patterns included *yes-no* questions and *wh*-questions, as in (19-22). During the training sessions, the participants were given an exercise sheet with both *yes-no* questions and *wh*-questions. The instructor first explained how to answer the questions in English by drawing participants' attention to example answers, and then the participants practiced these questions in pairs. Each training session lasted about 30 minutes. Oral answers given in the interviews were recorded for later analysis.

4.3. Materials

The experimenter orally asked each participant 15 questions in a quiet environment. Example test tokens used in the experiment are given in (19-22).

- (19) a. What is your favorite Japanese food?
- b. Who taught you Oral Communication in the first semester?
- (20) a. Did you study last night?
- b. What did you study?
- (21) a. Do you like fruits?
- b. Which fruit do you like best?
- (22) a. When did you graduate from high school?
- b. Who do you want to go to Kyoto with?

The questions were designed to elicit answers to the subject *wh*-words in (19), the *yes-no* questions in (20a, 21a), the object *wh*-words in (20b, 21b), and the PP *wh*-words in (22). One hundred and eighty answers in total were collected for each of the pre-training and post-training interviews.

⁸ The instructor gave fifteen questions to each participant in the two interviews.

4.4. Results

Participants' oral performance on the pre-instruction interview is summarized in Table 1. The results show that they adopted the reduced cleft strategy for 83.33% of the subject wh-questions and for 56.56% of the adjunct PP wh-questions. For example, reduced clefts were given for ten out of 12 responses to (19b), the subject wh-question, and for eight out of 12 responses to (22b), the adjunct PP wh-question, as shown in (23a) and (23b), respectively. However, in the case of the object wh-questions, their use of reduced clefts dropped to 16.67%.

Table 1 Pre-instruction production rates of reduced clefts (%)

Answer Type	Yes/No	DP	DP	DP
Question Type	Yes-No Q	subject wh-Q	object wh-Q	PP wh-Q
Production Rate (%)	69.44	83.33	16.67	55.56

(23) a. Mr. Bailey/Mr. Huang.

b. My friend/My family.

We assume that this subject-object asymmetry in the participants' use of reduced clefts as an answering strategy may be attributed to the linguistic fact that Japanese permits subject pro-drop more readily than object pro-drop in communication.

Table 2 is a summary of the post-instruction interview results obtained from the participants who received two 30-minute instruction sessions in the classroom. The results show substantial improvements in the participants' production of the answering patterns. 66.67% of their answers to the subject wh-questions had the answering pattern [XP AUX], and, surprisingly, 97.22% of their answers to the adjunct wh-questions were either [_{PP}P XP] or [_{TP}XP [_{VP}V [_{PP}P XP]]].

Table 2 Post-instruction production rates of reduced clefts (%)

Answer Type	Yes/No	DP	DP	DP
Question Type	Yes-No Q	subject wh-Q	object wh-Q	PP wh-Q
Production Rate (%)	11.11	33.33	5.56	2.78

Figure 1 illustrates the participants' pre- vs. post-instruction oral

performances with respect to the reduction of clefts by question type.

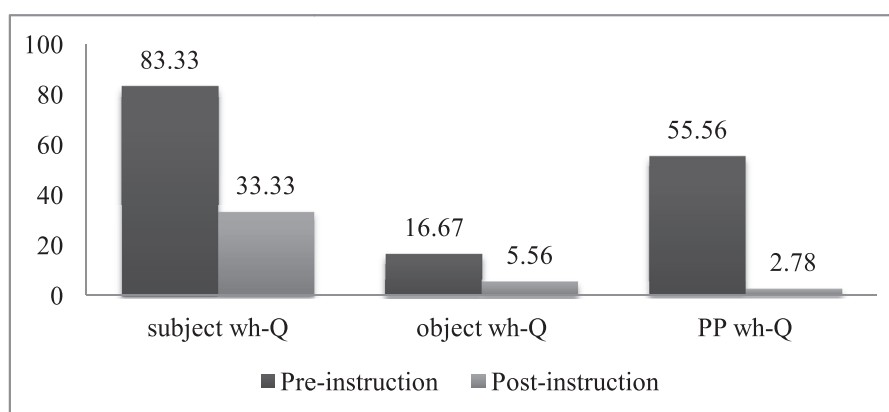


Figure 1 Pre-instruction vs. post-instruction production rates of reduced clefts (%)

These improvements indicate that the explicit teaching, even though it was brief, was effective for helping the L1 Japanese participants to choose an appropriate option in answering questions in L2 English.

5. Discussion

The present study investigated whether Japanese learners use reduced clefts as an answering strategy in responding to *wh*-questions in English. Given the typological difference between the in-situ focalization strategy in English (7a) and the reduced cleft strategy in Japanese (15), we predicted that non-reduced answering options would pose a challenge for Japanese-speaking learners of English. Our subsequent concern was to see whether such learners could be helped to acquire the target answering strategies through explicit classroom instruction.

The present study found strong L1 effects among L1 Japanese L2 English learners in the acquisition of answering strategies, similar to previous studies of L1 French/German L2 Italian learners (Belletti & Leonini 2004) and L1 English/German L2 French learners (Belletti, Bennati, & Sorace 2007). Consequently, our research question in (18a), “Do Japanese-speaking L2 learners of English show L1 effects in answering *wh*-questions?”, receives a positive answer. The present study also confirmed that explicit instruction can be effective for learners to overcome L1 transfer. Thus, the answer to our second research question in (18b), “Can explicit classroom instruction help facilitate

the L2 acquisition of answering strategies?”, is positive as well. We posit that instruction is effective because the acquisition of answering strategies is simply the L2 learner's selection or preference of one option from among several previously learned patterns, not the acquisition of a syntactic or semantic principle or constraint, which often involves a understanding of complex linguistic knowledge.

6. Conclusion

The present study indicates that explicit teaching can help L2 learners more readily gain access to available answering strategies in the target language, thereby making them more flexible and more effective in oral communication. Given that strategies appear to be a matter of preference for L2 learners, how early such communication strategies should be taught in the classroom remains an open question. However, based on the results of the present investigation, we suggest that answering options be introduced and practiced during the early stages of English education.

In addition, a topic for further study is how much instruction is sufficient for learners to permanently acquire such patterns in L2. We are also interested in determining whether prosodic focalization can be acquired along with in-situ focalization in English L2 acquisition (Yoshimura et al. 2015; Fujimori et al. 2015).

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